

## REVIEW OF DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES IN ENGLAND AND WALES

### ***Purpose***

To advise members of progress with the respective Reviews of Designated Landscapes England and Wales.

### **FOR INFORMATION**

### ***Key Issues***

- DEFRA have yet to publish the Ministerial response on the consultation to the Landscape Review, which will be influenced by the finalised Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.
- Progress is being made on establishing the National Landscapes, Parks & Trails Partnership, between the NAAONB, National Parks England, National Trail UK and Natural England, to be known as the Protected Landscapes Partnership.
- Ministerial Responsibility for AONBs in Wales has moved (back) to the Climate Change portfolio, under Julie James MS.
- The Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) is co-ordinating a range of activities and projects across the 8 Designated Landscapes in Wales.
- AONB Lead Officers in Wales are in the process of meeting with Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to review future funding options.
- The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) continues to liaise and co-ordinate collaboration with both governments and key stakeholders over progressing the agenda for AONBs.

### ***Reasons***

The 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP) was published in 2018. One of the outcomes was the 'Glover' Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs in England, produced in 2019 with 27 Proposals for Government. Proposal 24 stated that "AONBs should be strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, and renamed as National Landscapes." Proposal 25 suggested "A new National Landscapes Service bringing our 44 national landscapes together to achieve more than the sum of their parts". A subsequent consultation process followed in and the formal response is awaited.

Welsh Government have been working with AONB and National Park lead officers, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the NAAONB through Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) and the Biodiversity Deep Dive Designated Landscapes Subgroup to advance a range of collaborative initiatives.

## ***Implications***

### England

Government's response to Glover's "National Landscape Service" proposal has settled on the creation of a formal partnership in England intended to create a more collaborative way of working that amplifies and scales up the impact and influence of the National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Trails in England. Initially known as the National Landscapes, Parks and Trails Partnership, it is now being called the Protected Landscapes Partnership. The terms of reference for the Partnership are in development and DEFRA is allocating a budget up to March 2025 that will enable investment in the National Parks, AONBs and National Trails to collaborate more closely on three national priorities;

- **Recovering nature & tackling climate change:** contributing towards 30 by30 and relevant Environment Act & Environment IP targets
- Promoting **equity, diversity and inclusion** of people living, visiting, volunteering, working in and governing these special areas and improving access for all
- Increasing the understanding, capability and capacity of the partners to attract **private investment** into nature recovery

The Partnership will be governed by a Partnership Board, supported by a recently recruited Partnership Manager hosted by Natural England. DEFRA will provide the secretariat. The chair is not a regulated public appointment but the decision will be made by ministers.

It is hoped that the new Partnership, with its budget and priorities, will be able to support:-

- landscape scale delivery projects, including the Big Chalk initiative which stretches across southern England and may extend to cover species-rich grassland in parts of the Wye Valley AONB.
- delivery of the NAAONB's Art in the Landscape strategy and strengthen the application to Arts Council England for wider support using the arts as a tool to engage new audiences with AONBs.
- a programme of training on equity, diversity and inclusion for staff and leaders in Protected Landscapes

DEFRA are also supporting the forthcoming NAAONB rebrand of AONBs to National Landscapes. This is intended to reflect renewed values and boost understanding of the national significance of AONBs with more diverse communities, including residents, partners and visitors. However, currently any proposals to strengthen AONBs with new purposes and powers are held up in possible amendments to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, which is about to enter its 3<sup>rd</sup> reading in the Lords.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme has also been extended with increased funding until March 2025, in recognition of the positive feedback and outcomes delivered by FiPL. This continues to support the important role that Protected Landscapes play in delivering for nature, climate, people and place. It is anticipated that the best aspects of FiPL will be integrated within future environmental land management schemes within Protected Landscapes.

### Wales

Welsh Government (WG) Ministerial Responsibility for AONBs has moved (back) from the Rural Affairs to the Climate Change portfolio, under Julie James MS. However, the Designation of a new National Park in North East Wales will remain with Lesley Griffiths MS,

Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales and Trefnydd. Meanwhile work continues on the Recommendations of the Biodiversity Deep Dive.

Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) is the partnership of the Designated Landscapes in Wales: three National Parks and five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), along with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the NAAONB, who are working together to address key shared challenges, including action on the climate change and nature emergencies. A TCLW working group is also liaising with WG on the forthcoming Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS).

The lead officers from the 5 AONB Partnerships along with the NAAONB are involved in a series of meetings with WG and NRW on future funding for AONBs, as the current NRW funding offer ends in March 2024 and WG funding runs until March 2025.

TCLW and WG are developing a training programme for members of AONB JACs and National Park Authorities, taking into account the priorities of the Minister for Climate Change. Initially two areas have been identified for training later in the year:

- Tackling the Nature and Climate Emergencies, to be delivered by NRW, and
- Introduction to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), delivered by Anna Jones, TCLW Strategic Lead on EDI and Governance.

NRW, as the designating authority for Designated Landscapes in Wales on behalf of WG, are currently evaluating the case for the first new national park in Wales in almost 70 years. The area being considered for national park status centres on the existing Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB in the northeast of the country. NRW has established a team to lead on the designation, with their work including data and evidence gathering, and engagement with the local communities and other key stakeholders. A decision on the park's designation is expected within the next three years.

There is a statutory process to follow which was last completed in the 1950s and took around a decade. This time NRW also need to take account of new information and new legislation, such as incorporating principles of Sustainable Management of Natural Resources into the procedure. With government funding, a dedicated team and new technology, NRW hope to complete the process within the existing Senedd term, by 2026. Once this is done, and if the evidence supports a designation, then a Designation Order will be submitted to the Welsh Government. This would remove the largest AONB in Wales if the area becomes a National Park. The implications for the remaining 4 AONBs in Wales is unclear.

### ***Background***

In 2018 the [25 Year Environment Plan \(25YEP\)](#) set out the Government's vision for a quarter-of-a-century of action to help the natural world regain and retain good health.

Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) was established following the commitment to create a National Designated Landscape Partnership in 'Valued and Resilient: The Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks' (July 2018). The current chair of TCLW is Emyr Williams, Chief Executive Eryri NPA, and Andrew Blake is vice-chair for a two year term.